

24th MARCH 2025

>>> NEWSLETTER <<<

SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART

PROVINCE OF INDIA



NEWS FROM THE SANTA CRUZ COMMUNITY

>>> SANTA CRUZ COMMUNITY SHARES

As we look back over this year, two themes stand out for us from the Synod on Synodality – the calls to **Inter-Religious Dialogue** and to **Solidarity** (*Inclusivity, Bonding, Reaching Out*). Thus, in our newsletter, we share some of our activities in these two areas.

Our community is snugly situated between two strategic landmarks – the *Rama Krishna Mission Math (monastery) & Hospital* on one side, and the *Sadhu Vaswani Chowk*, on the other. This year, the *Ramakrishna Mission* and *Interreligious Solidarity Council* held a **Mumbai Parliament of Religions** in commemoration of Swami Vivekananda's historic speech at the **WORLD PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS** held in Chicago, Illinois, a century ago – Sept. 11th, 1893.

It was very Inspiring INDEED... Swami Vivekanand's 1893 speech was declaimed by an elderly monk who tried to imitate Vivekanand as closely as possible ... apparently, he has been doing this for many years at different venues ... and is near-perfect by now.



Fr. Gilbert De Lima, Rector of St. Pius X Seminary, Goregaon, was one of the speakers, and was later requested to present a 3-minute AV byte on the need for greater love and understanding in India. His well-researched and clear presentation had a profound impact on all. **A proud moment for us!**

Srs. Irene and Daphne Furtado attended this function and made friends with some of the Swamis; this was providential, because, two months later, our parish organised a function during Diwali – **United in Light** –

➤➤➤ CELEBRATING FAITH TOGETHER

at which the Heads of several different faiths were invited to pray with a multi-religious congregation. Together, they lit the **Samai**, and then led us in prayer, chanting melodious kirtans and bhajans in various languages, each from their respective Sacred texts. Finally, they walked around the hall, greeting each of the congregation with reverence, thus helping us to experience bonding at a deep spiritual level. As our parish priest, Fr. Felix, said:



The programme had that serious touch of religious leaders sharing, softened by the group later mingling together with fun.

All our guests were full of gratitude.

>>> ANTIM ARDAAS

Here, in Santa Cruz, we have been friendly with a Punjabi-Sikh family. *Beena*, a Catholic teacher, married to *Aman Wadhwa*, has been faithful in giving us a lift to church every Sunday for Mass. Besides, over the last three years, her husband, Aman, has been helping us to get to Midnight Mass at Christmas, making a second trip to the church, to bring us back home, as conveyance is not easily available at that late hour. Thus, our friendship has deepened over the years.

On Independence Day, we were invited to lunch, but we preferred an *Evening Tea* at their home, where we were introduced to their daughter, *Prisha*, a CA student, and *Taruna*, Aman's only sister who stays with them, and was happily chatting away, while serving us. Aman mentioned that Taruna had complaints about her health, but she had no signs of any illness and was suffering silently. Later, she was diagnosed with galloping cancer, which had spread to other organs and was at an advanced stage. Beena shared with me their joint decision to care for their family member, lovingly called *Nanhi*, at home, giving her the very best during her last days.

We were shocked, but also inspired by this beautiful family, especially Beena, and *Nanhi*, herself, who continued living normally in the midst of such trauma, and who stood by their commitment to each other until the very end. We joined the family in prayer over the next few weeks, until *Nanhi* slowly passed over in the early hours of Sept. 13th, just 25 days after our meeting with the happy family. A very sad event for the trio, as well as for us, who shared their pain!



Srs. Daphne, Joaquina, and I attended the memorial service, *Antim Ardaas*, at the *Sikh Gurudwara* in Santa Cruz, very near our community. Many Catholics (friends of Beena) and Hindus also attended. We entered the Sikh holy place for the first time, with much reverence and openness to new learnings.



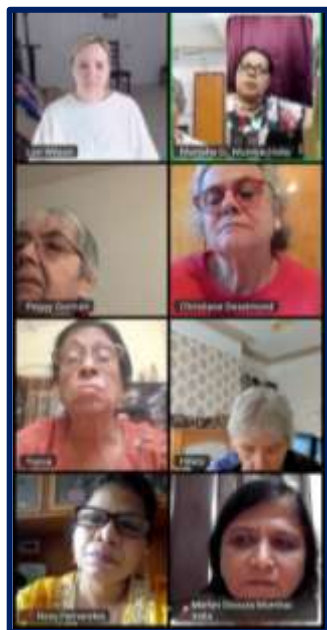
The prayer service lasted for one hour, with *kirtans* (holy songs from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, which is the Holy Book of the Sikhs) followed by the *Antim Ardaas*, in which all the devotees present stood while the priest recited a prayer saying a **FINAL GOODBYE** to the departed Soul of *Taruna Wadhwa*. **ARDAAS** is a *Standing Prayer* offered by the priest for various petitions. **ANTIM**, meaning **LAST**, is a prayer offered for a departed soul.

It was a beautiful prayer raising our hearts and minds to the Almighty Lord of the Universe, who gathers together people of different faiths i.e. Sikhs, Christians, Hindus, and many others. As we offered our condolences, we could feel the pain of our dear trio ... their dear *Nanhi* was no more with them physically.

At the end, all of us had *langer* (light snacks) in another hall. People of different creeds were together as one family... It was an experience of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam*: "वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्".

Irene D'Souza rscj

>>> SOLIDARITY WITH THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATES/COLLABORATORS



The "*International Connections*" – an **online** group of Associates, Alumni and Mission Partners – was formed around January 2020 when the world was in the grip of Covid '19. A couple of the **Associates** of the USA/Canada took the initiative of calling together the lay collaborators of the Society International and grouped them under the Northern and Southern hemispheres. Some of our Associates from India (in Malad) and a few Rscj also joined the group of the Northern hemisphere.

Since then, Online meetings have been held almost every month to share reflections on issues touching our lives in different countries, our major concerns and experiences of interest, current happenings in our Society all over the world; we also pray together, celebrate Society feasts of Saints Madeleine Sophie, Philippine Duchesne, Mater Admirabilis, and work on action plans relevant to our countries and society at large.

There is a strong bond of friendship and mutual concern for each other as we grow into the "**FAMILY OF THE SACRED HEART.**" We have reflected together on the Society seeking new ways of organizing ourselves, the moves to forming 'New Provinces', the political scenarios of our countries with areas of turmoil and turbulence that have called us to widen our hearts and embrace suffering humanity in compassion across the globe.



In January 2025, Sr. Daphne Furtado and I were asked to conduct the meeting. In the context of the centenary of the canonisation of St. Madeleine Sophie, the consensus of the group was that we explore the *Spirituality of the Sacred Heart*, to understand better what it means to be true **Associates** of the Society in today's world of the 21st century.

So, we prepared a power-point presentation beginning with excerpts from the RSCJ International website describing '**The Launch of the centenary year of Madeleine Sophie's canonisation; A Saint for the modern age**', ... high-lighting the following:



A Life of Dedication, An International Legacy, A Model of Faith and Action, and emphasising the importance of **community, service, and the education of women** which continue to inspire educators and social reformers even to this day.

We also presented Pope Francis' encyclical on the Sacred Heart - '*Dilexit nos*'- (*He loved us*) through a graphical summary of the main quotes, as illustrated.

For many of us, especially those who were touched by the plight of migrants in their country and the lack of compassion from political leaders towards the people governed by them, the challenge lay in the following point:

WE NEED TO BUILD A GUEST HOUSE IN OUR HEARTS

We will reflect on what this means for us concretely at our next meeting and continue to respond to the other aspects of the encyclical and Our Holy Mother's continuing legacy for our world today, over the rest of the year.

Manisha Gonsalves rscj

>>> Tin Jubilee Celebrations of Prerana Nursery School

PRERANA Nursery School celebrated its 10th annual day on 14th December 2024 with great enthusiasm and joy. The event was held on the school grounds, which were beautifully decorated with colourful banners and balloons. Students of every class showcased their talents in a variety of dances, skits, and musical acts, while some former teachers and students shared their memories of happy times they had spent in the school. Parents and teachers filled the seats, cheering and applauding the children's efforts. I was happy to be present as Chief Guest on this very auspicious occasion, especially meeting the students and their parents again.



The highlight of the day was the award ceremony, where students were recognized for their academic achievements and extracurricular contributions. Sr. Marie Noronha, the Guest of Honour, delivered an inspiring speech, emphasising the importance of hard work and dedication. I too was called upon to share my experiences as I was connected with the school from its inception.

It was a proud moment for us to witness the progress and growth over these ten years.



Prerana Nursery School started in 2014, with just 14 children and 3 classes – Nursery, Lower K.G. and Upper K.G. – but gradually the numbers increased. At the request of some parents, we also started a play group, limiting the number of children to 30 per class so that we could give them individual attention. In 2016, I introduced a classroom for *play-way* activities, and in 2017 Sr. Fatima, after a year in the Sophia Nursery School, returned as *Prerana Nursery In-charge*, to continue the educational initiative, then in its third year.

Looking back over these 10 years, one cannot but rejoice at the progress the school has made, reaching out to so many children, who have thus received a good foundation for their on-going education. The *play-way* activity room is now fully equipped, and the children look forward to many activities, like the Ex-students' Reunion, Family Day, Diwali *Dhamaka*, with trained teachers appointed for Sports and Music, to ensure that learning is enjoyable and interesting. Medical check-ups are also held regularly. "*A healthy mind in a healthy body*" is what the school is striving for.



All this has been possible because of the whole-hearted cooperation of the energetic and enthusiastic teachers, who are always ready to implement creative ideas and activities for the all-round development of the students. It was also wonderful to meet the parents who continue to support Prerana Nursery School as it grows from strength to strength. Finally, I was impressed by the large number of people from the neighbourhood who attended the programme to encourage and cheer our children.

KUDOS TO PRERANA



NURSERY SCHOOL!

Jokina D'Mello rscj